DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 295 UD 018 619

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TITLE Self-Concept: A Comparison of Low Socioeconomic, Low Achieving Secondary Students Across Ethnic, Sex and Age Variables.
PUB DATE [78]
NOTE 6p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Analysis of Variance; *Black Students; Case Studies; *Caucasian Students; *Ethnic Groups; *Mexican Americans; Secondary Education; *Self Concept; *Self Esteem
IDENTIFIERS *Self Esteem Scale

ABSTRACT

The self esteem of Anglo, Negro, and Mexican American secondary students was measured using the Self-Esteem Scale (SES). This instrument was administered to 144 students with equal representation from sex, ethnicity, and grade levels (i.e., each of 18 cells contained 8 students). A three-factor analysis of variance revealed a significant main effect for sex, while the ethnic main effect, grade main effect, and all two-way interactions were found to be nonsignificant. These findings suggest that self esteem among ethnic groups does not differ to the extent postulated by some investigators. The absence of any large differences among the groups may possibly be due to inservice efforts directed at making teachers culturally aware. (Author/GC)

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Self-Concept: A Comparison of Low Socioeconomic, Low Achieving Secondary Students Across Ethnic, Sex And Age Variables

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Several investigators have postulated for minority group members a low self-concept based upon ethnic caste. However, results concerning the relationship of self-concept to ethnic group membership seem to be equivocal and inconclusive. Although several studies involving elementary and junior high school children found mean self-concepts significantly higher for Anglo children than for Negro children (Henton, 1964; Long & Henderson, 1968) and evidence of depressed self-concepts for Mexican-American children (Evans, 1969; Hishiki, 1969), other studies oppose their results. A growing body of recent research indicates that there are no significant differences between the self-concepts of Negro and Anglo students (Carpenter & Busse, 1969; Hodgkins & Stakenas, 1969; DeBlaissie & Healy, 1970), and no significant differences between self-concepts of Mexican-American and Anglo children (Carter, 1968; DeBlaissie & Healy, 1970).

The many conflicting studies may reflect problems in definition and instrumentation or even defects in research design. For example, some studies failed to allow for intervening variables such as age, sex, socioeconomic status, and achievement. This study attempts to allow for them. It includes age (grade levels) and sex as variables; and, to control for the effects of socioeconomic status and achievement, a sample was selected from a group of students who were relatively homogeneous with respect to both those variables.

UD018619

Method

Design and Procedure

The self-esteem of Negro, Mexican-American and Anglo students was measured late in the 1973-74 school year, using the Self-Esteem Scale (Grobe, 1974). This instrument was administered to 144 students with equal representation from sex, ethnicity, and grade levels (i.e., each of 18 cells contained 8 students). The experimental design consisted of a three-factor analysis. Regression analysis was employed, with the Self-Esteem Scale (SES) score serving as the criterion variable. Pupil sex, ethnicity, and grade level were used as predictor variables to categorize the data to test hypotheses on their effectiveness in accounting for student attitudes.

Instrument

The SES provided a general assessment of "self-esteem" for students with limited reading skills. It was designed so that its 15 items were short and easy to read. Three response choices were used, with a score of three representating the most positive attitude and a score of one representing the least positive. The 15 items allowed for a maximum possible score of 45 and minimum of 15.

Subjects

Students were selected from high-school reading classrooms in the Dallas Independent School District. All students were participants in the Emergency School Aid Act (ESAA) funded Secondary Reading Project. In addition, all students possessed limited reading skills and were, in general, from lower socioeconomic levels.

Results and Discussion

Results for the three-factor analysis of variance are summarized in Table 1. As noted in Table 1, the sex main effect was significant, while the ethnicity main effect, grade main effect, and all two-way interactions

Table 1

Three-Factor Analysis of Variance
for Self-Esteem Scale Scores

Source	df	MS	F
Sex (S)	1	85.57	6.10*
Ethnicity (E)	2	4.52	0.33
Grade (G)	2	0.33	0.02
S x E	2	5.77	0.41
S x G	2	24.25	1.73
E x G	4	25.67	1.83
Error	130	14.02	

*p <.05

Table 2

Summary of Self-Esteem Scale
Mean Scores for Sex, Ethnicity
and Grade Levels

Variables		Mean
Sex:	Male	33.8
	Female	32.3
Ethnicity:	Negro	32.9
	Mexican-American	32.9
	Anglo	33.4
Grade:	Eight	33.2
	Nine	33.1
	Ten	33.0

were not significant. Examination of the mean self-esteem scores in Table 2 reveals that the mean for males (33.8) is larger than the mean for females (32.5). The nonsignificant main effect for ethnicity suggests that no overall or consistent difference exists among the Black, Mexican-American, and Anglo students. Additionally, nonsignificant results for the grade main effect indicate that self-esteem is fairly stable across time.

These data partially support the results of Hodgkins & Stakenas (1969) in that self-esteem (self-concept) differences among ethnic groups disappeared when differences in socioeconomic status were taken into account. More specifically, these data suggest that when students are from low, homogeneous achievement and socioeconomic levels and when age and sex are accounted for in the statistical model, self-esteem does not differ among ethnic groups. An ancillary finding was that the mean self-esteem of low achieving, low socioeconomic status males was significantly higher than that for similar females. This confirms similar results reported by DeBlaissie & Healy (1970) and Grobe (1974).

In summary, this study suggests that self-esteem among ethnic groups does not differ to the extent postulated by some investigators. Possibly, the absence of any large differences among the groups may be due to in-service efforts (i.e., Affirmative Action Program) directed at making teachers culturally aware.

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